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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of how children should be reared from birth to become members of a faith community. The paper begins by seeking answers in psychological theories and research studies of Piaget, Bandura and Sears, Mahler, and Erikson. It is asserted that interactions with primary caregivers are the essential ingredients by means of which young children construct the meaning of faith. Not just what is taught but also the method of teaching will influence a young child's faith construction. True constancy in caregiving is necessary for faith development. A well-nurtured baby can develop a "mother of oneness" within itself which will ward off loneliness and panic and unrealistic expectations of perfection in human relationships, and will preserve faith. Later generosity as a participant in a faith community has its roots in the caregiving comforts and adjustments of the first years of life. The paper then goes on to describe for caregivers 24 recommended actions which will help nourish the foundations of faith in the infant and toddler years. Finally, the paper suggests six ways in which caregivers can fulfill civic responsibilities related to creating optimal conditions for childrearing. (RH)

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The Roots of Faith:

The Crucial Role of Infant/Toddler Caregivers

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Running head: ROOTS OF FAITH

The Roots of Faith:

The Crucial Role of Infant/Toddler Caregivers

Faith Beginnings

Before we can begin to examine the roots of faith in the infant and toddler years, we need to enquire what "faith" we are talking about. Shall we define faith as unquestioning belief in rituals or certain modes of prayer, certain specific gestures on particular occasions? Can we equate any one set of religious practices with early faith development? For some, faith may simply be a belief in the mysterious orderliness of a vast universe. Einstein once remarked that God was not malicious, but He was "raffiniert" (crafty, subtle). For others, religious faith may serve as a kind of payment in advance against the terrors, sorrows, and sins of ordinary lives--against a future punishment by a stern God. Some people's "faith" may lead them to condemn unfortunate others as in some way "deserving" their terrible fates. Some have believed that faith implies unswerving loyalty and commitment. Eichman, the Nazi exterminator, protested at his trial that he had only loyally and faithfully followed orders. "I gave my oath to my Fuhrer. There is nothing worse than breaking your oath." When the prosecutor asked quietly, "Even killing six million people?", Eichman fell silent.

Even those who profess moral beliefs and can reason in sophisticated ways about moral choices and issues (Kohlberg, 1987) may have difficulty in behaving morally. Everyday snobby, catty, insensitive behaviors are as common as dandelions. The psychiatrist, Robert Coles, who has written so perceptively about the lives of children and of the poor, observed that:

> There is a great gap between transcendent ideologies and convictions, high-flown theoretical notions and the issue of

> immanence in our lives: how are we going to behave five minutes from now with one or another person? . . . Some people talk a great line but don't live up to it. (1982, p. 15)

A dialectical mystery infuses human strivings. We use our God-given energies often in fiercely contradictory yet quintessentially human tasks: the struggle for self sufficiency and self actualization of our personal gifts and the attempt to create empathic communications and communities with others.

The philosopher Heschel (1955) believed that acts of faith teach us the meaning of the acts. Purity of motive is not as important as actions.

> Faith is an act of the whole person, of mind, will, and heart. Faith is sensitivity, understanding, engagement, and attachment; not something achieved once and for all, but an attitude one may gain and lose. (p. 154)

Acts of charity, consideration, small gestures of kindliness and concern, caring and compassion (in Hebrew--mitsvot) can define the living faith of humans.

> The mitsvah, the humble single act of serving God, of helping man, of cleansing the self, is our way of dealing with the problem of evil. (p. 377)

Perhaps most simply, then, faith is a principle of goodness that we call God. We witness for faith as best we can in our everyday lives, giving meaning to faith as we keep the faith through our actions.

Theories and Researches: Roots for Faith Building in Babies

How are we to rear our children from birth to become members of a faith community? What theories and research clues can we find to help us with the mighty tasks that ordinary devoted parents carry out in rearing babies to become helping, sharing, caring persons?

We are meaning makers in our world. We construct and reconstruct the meaning of our experiences. And we renegotiate our understandings as we live and learn and have further experiences to digest (Kegan, 1982). Children of despair have learned from their early experiences with caregivers the way to confusion, chaos, and cruelty. In contrast, children who have learned loving reciprocities in families can construct meanings of concern, cherishing, and steadfastness in serving. They have learned faith.

Piaget.

Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, saw children as problem-constructors and as theory-builders. According to Piaget's constructivist view, children come to know the world firstly through actions of their eyes and hands and bodies, and later through mental activities. Children create theories of logical, physical, and social relationships (Piaget, 1970). They see how the real world reacts to or intervenes in their intentions and actions. Through extension of this principle (by which, for example babies construct spatial understandings and the physics of causal relationships) we can see that interactions with primary caregivers are the essential ingredients by means of which young children will construct for themselves the meaning of faith. Not just what we teach but how we teach will influence a young child's faith construction.

Bandura and Sears.

Imitation of caregivers who have nurtured them and on whom they are so critically dependent emerges early among babies (Bandura, 1969; Sears, 1957). Anyone who has watched a young toddler seriously sit down to read his book (upside down perhaps) next to a beloved papa who is reading the newspaper can attest to the power of early imitations. When we watch a toddler scold

and wag a threatening finger at her dolls, we know she has learned by example only too well from a parent.

Mahler.

Mahlerian theory has been particularly sensitive to the importance of the relationship between infant and caregiver. During the first three years of life, the child journeys toward internalizing a good "mother of oneness"--the term that Louise Kaplan (1978) uses in her poetic rendition of Mahler's theory.

In the first months of life, the major task of a young child is to sink into an absolute conviction of symbiotic oneness with a caregiver who holds, nourishes, comforts, and ministers to baby. Somewhere about five months of age, the baby begins to "hatch." Little limbs stiffen when baby is held, baby more and more turns outward to gaze with interest on the rest of the world. The practicing period toward the end of the first year involves lots of stretching and creeping, attempts to gain physical control over handling skills, and physical locomotion. Kaplan interprets the motoric venturings of this period as "putting a rind on the body." We must achieve our separateness and positive sense of individual self before we can freely choose to join a communal enterprise such as faith building.

Freedom to explore on the floor and access to baby-proofed environments for exploration help an infant develop a delight in body skills and venturesome activities. During this period there has to be a central figure to move away from. The vitality of striving to become your own self prospers if you have a central faith that there is someone there to return to if you move too far too fast: not a changing figure every day, not an indifferent caregiver who is rotating with a colleague, but a figure of faith against whom an infant can struggle for individuation toward unique selfhood. Mahlerian

theory talks about the child of one to one-and-a-half years pulling up to standing and beginning to toddle away into a glorious new world of verticality. The toddler how has a "love affair" with the whole world. Joy and pleasure are at a peak. Toddlers at this stage are so sure that the world will hold and protect them as their parents' arms have done that they are even likely to walk fully clothed straight into a swimming pool if not watched carefully! Somewhere toward the middle of the second year of life, this assurance comes crashing down. Greyness sets in and crankiness. Toddlers become aware of the reality that parents are <u>not</u> there for them exactly as they wish, when they wish. The baby's "body mind" has now become a thinking mind. Baby's struggles to become a separate person are full of conflict. It was so pleasant to be merged with the caregiver of the early months. Yet it is so wonderful to be a separate independent creature. So in these confusions the toddler becomes difficult and contrary, wanting to be separate but fearing the loss of the earlier intimacy.

Toddlers struggle toward <u>constancy</u>, where the good parent who cares for you is <u>also</u> the bad parent who hauls you off to bed just when company is coming, or who refuses to give you a cookie just before dinner. Constancy helps us to accept the ordinary humanness of people who can sometimes be a pain and sometimes are so very dear to us. Constancy is a achievement that gives us a rudder of inner faith. Despite the ups and downs of life, we can make it through to be faithful to intimate others, to try again after failure, to forgive, and to strive toward healing in painful personal relations. Mahlerian theory is really a tale of the dialectic dance that goes on throughout our lives: wanting to be merged, first with a loving parent, later perhaps with a beloved spouse in marriage, in sexuality, in tenderness, and as adults merged as members of a faith community in our closeness to God. And

yet at the same time, there is a human streak that wants to be independent, separate. I want to be myself, do it myself. And in toddlerhood this desperate wish comes out in absurd stubbornness, as when a two-year-old insists on wearing his new shoes into the bathtub or tying his own shoelaces (which he cannot yet do). Tensions build and temper tantrums can storm up as toddlers struggle for control over their own bodies and behaviors. How hard it is for a young toddler even to stay still for a diaper change!

The last part of the older toddler period Mahler calls rapprochement. Toddlers can shadow you, dart away, pester you with requests to play with them or to hold them. They can pile your lap with toys to capture your attention, but they may run away from you when called for lunch.

Many of us have had a fight with a two-year-old who would not get into the bath--and then had a fight with that same two who would not come out of the bath. A child must learn constancy--that the parent you now hate or are very angry at is the very same parent who loves you and whom you love to snuggle with for a bedtime story. Constancy is a necessary prerequisite for the faith that builds strong human relationships such as marriage later in life. Otherwise, you get the Don Juan effect. Try one spouse, who of course is going to be the most special in the world. But a few months later, find out that person is only human. Well, find another one. I have known lots of people who act out serial "cafeteria" behaviors in sexuality and marriage because they do not have a "mother of oneness" within--the faith of constancy. For them, the new partner always promises to be ideal.

True constancy is necessary for faith development. Constancy means you can lose a job, you can lose a person you really cherish, and after mourning, pick yourself up without cursing Man or God and go on living, feeling that you will do the best you can. Constancy keeps the dialectical tensions of life

from overwhelming us, helps us surmount difficulties without turning on those near and dear to us. Lacking constancy, many adults denigrate a spouse, empty their intimate other of all good qualities and then search for another "perfect" partner or friend. We are neither good witches nor bad witches, but only human parents. Toddlers need to internalize this deep acceptance of the contradictory aspects of their strong feelings about caregivers. A well nurtured baby can achieve the mother of oneness within to ward off loneliness and panic and unrealistic expectations of perfection in human relationships and to preserve faith in living a fully human life serving God.

Erikson.

Let us consider some of the dialectical ideas in Erik Erikson's theory and what they imply for quality infant caregiving and faith building (Erikson, 1950; Honig, 1987).

For Erikson, the life span encompasses a series of eight nuclear conflicts, struggles between positive and negative (or dark) poles. During sensitive developmental periods, the outcome of one or another of these conflicts is more critical for further growth toward achieving adult identity and integrity. All the conflicts exist in some form at every stage. And each struggled-through stage eventuates in a ratio of positive to negative aspects.

The first major struggle is between basic trust that the world is a positive place to grow up in versus a basic mistrust of caregiver and of the self. When caregivers are uncomfortable or irritated by body closeness or unwilling to meet a baby's needs when the baby is upset (rather than when the adults feel like it), the baby may well have profound feelings of indifference to others' hurts. A child may feel that it is hopeless to try to learn the social skills that parents require and not worth struggling to work hard at

school or job. Research shows that toddlers who have been abused by parents exhibit emotional indifference toward peers in distress (George & Main, 1979).

Trust is built on a four-way signal system (Honig, 1978). Babies come to trust their caregivers and their own needs. Parents must trust their own capacity to nurture well, and they must validate and respond to the baby's strong signals of distress. Ainsworth's observations (1982) in babies' homes revealed that some babies had mothers who picked them up promptly when they cried in discomfort and tried to respond sensitively and appropriately to meet the babies' needs. These babies became securely attached to their caregivers. They enjoyed being held and could melt into arms. They could also accept more easily when a parent had to put them down. They cried less but used other communicative modes more, toward the end of the first year of life. When the parent was present, they used that presence as a secure beacon to launch into constructive play with toys. Building on these findings, Sroufe and colleagues (Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978) discovered that securely attached infants grew up to become more competent older toddlers. Secure children proved more positive and zestful in approaching difficult tool-using tasks. They cooperated more with parental suggestions while trying to solve the tasks. In play with peers, preschoolers who had been securely attached in infancy were more popular with peers and with teachers. In contrast, insecurely attached infants grew into toddlers who gave up far more easily when faced with difficult problem-solving tasks. They were more oppositional to parents, more negative, cried more, and threw more temper tantrums. The effects of basic trust building in infancy are far reaching.

The modalities of this first Eriksonian nuclear conflict involve a balance between <u>giving</u> and <u>getting</u>. As an infant learns to accept feeding, cuddling, soothing in the styles the caregiver provides, if the relationship

is mutually satisfying, the child learns how to grow up to become a giver even as he or she has learned how to take in the ways and styles of the particular family. Later generosity as a participant in a faith community has its roots in the caregiving comforts and adjustments of the first years of life.

The second Eriksonian nuclear conflict has to do with a balance between achieving autonomy and a child's sense of shame, doubt, or defiance toward caregivers who try to wrestle away the child's rights to have wishes and desires of his or her own. The modalities of this second struggle are between holding on and letting go. Letting go can really be explosive: witness a toddler breaking into a temper tantrum in a restaurant because you don't want to let him have a slice of bread before the meal which has been too long in coming. Toddlers can lose control so devastatingly wildly. They become so upset, and if you become terribly upset, they will really feel life is a wreck! The best you can do for a toddler who is screaming and thrashing around is to do some deep breathing to calm yourself and try just to be there, present for him, so that when he comes out of his tantrum he can mold back onto your body and feel that your calmness has been there for them to hold on to and to hold him together. Letting go--of naughty words, impulsive actions (and bowel movements just after you have taken them off the potty!)--are also typical of toddlers. We must try to help toddlers learn the differences between holding on as cherishing, or defending legitimate self interests, and holding on as selfishness or uncooperative defiance. The polarities of these modalities are hard to learn. Parents would do well to remember that if we force too much on toddlers in the way of feeding, toileting, and sleep demands, they may later reject and throw away some of our most cherished beliefs--in a reasonably clean and orderly environment, in religious

observances, and social graces. The balancing tight ropes in the arena of rearing children will require delicate "dancing" from us all!

The third Eriksonian conflict has to do with using one's new-found powers of willfulness to make choices and take initiatives, versus a permanent sense of guilt some caregivers instill over the "creative" behaviors of young children that may cause unintended disorganizations for parents. Older toddlers are playful. They try to get others to do things for them. They play make-believe games so that parents worry whether their children are wildly imaginative or telling lies. They use intrusive modes (especially intrusions into the ears!) to talk until parents wish there were a STOP button to press somewhere.

If the early Eriksonian conflicts have been judiciously negotiated by caregivers, a child should be able to make responsible choices and, further, to take responsibility for those choices. A child should be able to hold on to his own and his family's beliefs so that he or she does not have to run with a gang later on or give in to peer pressure for dangerous, self-destructive activities. Thus, fully formed faith is an adult capacity whose roots lie in early mutual interactions with caregivers.

> Out of the conflict between trust and mistrust, the infant develops hope which is the earliest form of what gradually becomes faith in adults. If you say that an adult has faith, I'd say, well, I hope so. But if you said that a baby has faith, I'd say that's quite a baby. Real faith is a very mature attitude. (Erikson, 1987, p. 135)

I believe that faith involves not only attitudes, but also actions. If the creation of faith is through interactions with caregivers, then what prescriptions can we advance to help parents and others build faith during the

infant years? We will look in the next section at ideas for transactions with babies that build on theory and research findings.

Ideas for Caregivers: Interpersonal Prescriptions

Let us specify some interpersonal prescriptions for caregivers that can help nourish the foundations of faith in the infant/toddler years. Caregivers fundamentally need to become mirrors of positive self esteem in intimate, mutual attunements with babies.

1. Trust yourself as a caring person--despite bouts of ordinary human tiredness or upset, despite angers toward a continually crying baby or exasperation with upsets. Sometimes we want to shut the door and be free of tending to infant needs so that we can shower, read a book, make love, or just rest. Yet, despite such yearnings, baby is being tended with the most loving you can muster. And you are O.K. to be human in your feelings too!

2. Trust the infant's signals. Ainsworth's researches (1982) on patterns of mothering during the first year of life revealed that caregivers who fed babies in tempo with baby needs, who promptly picked up and soothed crying babies and interpreted signals of distress responsively, had infants who were more securely attached at the end of the first year of life. These babies also enjoyed being held more peacefully, and yet were more likely not to protest when put down. Contingent pacing means you tune into your baby's signals. Is she overstimulated? Has he had enough of the game and is even upset though earlier he seemed to enjoy the interaction? The perceptive adult is a quick noticer of subtle signs.

3. Tender, careful holding builds faith. Skin contact and comfort are essential body vitamins for the flourishing of babies. A baby who can mold onto your body, who drapes and snuggles easily for pleasure, for comfort, is a child who will grow up sure of the loving kindness of the world of persons--

and so more likely to grow in understanding of the works of loving kindness people need to do for and with each other later in life as participants in a faith community.

4. Have genuine encounters with your little one. Focused attention and genuine interest in a child make a child feel worthwhile (Briggs, 1975). Many well meaning caregivers spend time with their children but may be busy thinking about a thousand other things to be done, such as making a dental appointment, or that you are running low on diapers or rice cereal. Such distractions take your attention from your child. When you are having a genuine encounter, the child feels that what he has to say or what she is interested in or engaged in is really important to you.

5. Accept the fierceness of early infant needs. Some caregivers are startled by the fierce neediness of tiny babies (Kaplan, 1978). They may be disconcerted by how strongly babies suck, how greedily they gulp, how despairingly they cry if they are wet, uncomfortable, hungry, lonesome, or colicky. Deep inside, caregivers might wonder if a baby can devour them with such strong neediness. Some may feel they have to distance themselves from the baby, and not respond to the almost terrifying intensity of neediness in infants. But the caregiver who maintains a sturdy faith in ability to minister to needs will not tune out nor turn off. Despite the energetic expressions of distress in little ones, most caregivers with loving intentions can keep in tune with babies in the midst of crying storms. It is important not to project evil onto babies. They do not cry to hurt us. They cry as a strong signal to enlist our help for their early troubles in settling their guts and systems (Honig, 1985b). Let us help as best we can; we cannot give up or turn away, but neither do we need to act out anger toward the tiny helpless beings who so invade our lives with their early fierce urges. We

were once babies, too. Someone had faith enough that we would grow up to give to others so that they were willing to be generous givers to our own early intense needs.

6. Be generous with admiring glances and body language that affirm a child. Admiring eyes that shine on a child help imbue that child with the energy to go on and grow up and learn all the difficult socialization skills (wiping our nose on a hanky, not on a hand; toileting rather than messing diapers; saying 'please' and 'thank you'; waiting for food to be served instead of banging imperiously on the table; etc.). Eyes that affirm, eyes that validate, eyes that express our belief in the intrinsic goodness and capability of baby can strengthen the baby's faith in herself or himself (Honig, 1981). Early faith is woven of many strands. Faith in our willingness to meet needs has to be meshed with infants' faith in their own difficult struggles to learn, to accomplish, and to become humans who can serve to nurture others in a faith community when they are grown.

7. Leisurely bodily care affirms the "O.K.ness" of baby bodies. Timing matters. The harmony of matching tempos and styles reassures the infant that her way of nursing, his way of wiggling while being diapered, are all right. Hurrying their bodily functions distresses babies (and other humans, too!). Bath time takes longer for some. Eating is an impetuous dash and mess affair for some tots. For others, chewing and eating is a <u>slow</u> process that seems to take forever. Encourage a baby's interaction when the <u>baby</u> shows readiness for stimulation. Respect for the tempos and time needs of babies can add to their somatic conviction of worthiness. And those who feel deeply that they are worth the time and patience of caregivers can grow up with a deeper sense of meeting the needs of unfortunate people in society who need our patience

and our most creative efforts in order to solve problems of mental illness, homelessness, learning disabilities, and the like.

8. Shared attention and construction of shared meaning convinces the baby that you are really tuned into her signals and interests. Look where the baby gazes. Comment on the toy he handles or is interested in. Mutual attention to familiar patterns baby prefers reinforces the conviction that all is right with baby's world. You are the special adults who know the special routines or back and forth games that are necessary for baby's harmony and security. Sometimes even handing a chewed-on crust of bread or toy peacefully back and forth with a baby is a routine that enhances baby's conviction of sharing satisfying experiences.

9. Give power to early communications. Turn-taking talk even when infants are in the early stages of cooing and babbling are important (Honig, 1985a). Use scaffolding talk with toddlers whose vocabulary power may be in short supply. "We're going to see grandpa. We are going to ride in the -----!" is a wonderful scaffolding for baby to chime in with car as a triumphant correct response. Rhyming games are fun:

"Squeaky, the little brown mouse
Lives in a little brown -------."

Toddlers love the power of being able to supply words. They love to name. They love to jabber long strings of earnest syllables. Acknowledge their early babbles with your best "Uh-huh!" Expressive skills may be in short supply, but babies need to know that you respect their earliest communication efforts.

Read, read, read to babies. From early months onward, hook your babies on books. Many books for babies encourage thoughtfulness and awareness about the needs of others. Cadenced words, chanted words, and sleep-time songs will

imbue your baby with delight in words and language. In order to be effective in a faith community, adults need to be able to share meanings and concerns and plans for helping and worshipping through language. Create an early passion for language.

10. Empathize with your baby. Empathy means being understood emotionally from your own point of view. Sometimes this is called "affective attunement" (Stern, 1985). Let a child own his or her own feelings even when you firmly disapprove of his actions or her words. A naughty baby, a crabby child, a fearful toddler, a messy youngster, needs to know that you understand her urges, although you cannot permit hurting others ever, nor can you let a child destroy or hurt things that belong to others. Yarrow and her colleagues have found that when parents are consistent models of comforting when a baby is upset or worried and they firmly disallow the use of aggression in settling social difficulties, then those babies showed early signs of altruism and concern for others, and attempts to be helpful (Pines, 1979). Such an attempt could be baby bringing his very own blanket over to cover a grandma who looks tired; or baby offering hungry papa a taste of her own well chewed zwieback.

11. The gift of courage grows from the secure, tender, careful way in which adults tend to babies and respond to their needs appropriately (Honig, 1982). Protect children from your inner volcanoes of anger, from the deepest sorrows that invade your soul. These are your private struggles. Babies need a courageous model who compartmentalizes. A very depressed caregiver will have a baby mirroring the sad, depressed features within months after birth. The caregiver who has many private furies will frighten the infant who sees the eruptions all too frequently. Find places and times and persons with whom you can work out private anguishes. For the young baby, courage comes from the brave model, the nurturing model, the caregiver whose cheerfully lopsided

ratio of signals of approval and appreciation is far in excess of signals of anger or rejection. Infants reference us to see how the emotional wind is blowing. Stern (1985) put infants on a billiard table and had them start to creep toward their parent on the other side of the table. In front of the parent was a wind-up toy making weird noises. Baby glances at caregiver's face. Depending on whether the face expresses delight, genuine pleased interest or fright, the baby will be brave and paddle on four paws across the table or turn and scurry back in the opposite direction. As we encourage babies to use our bodies as refueling stations, for comfort when they are distressed or crabby, or shy or discouraged, our bodies and our availability encourage baby to move out further into the unknown adventures of the environment. Courageous toddlers are more likely to have had mothers who gave the babies control over feeding, who allowed the babies to decide on the level and amount of stimulation given (Martin, 1981).

12. Judicious provision of toys and materials plus floor freedom helps build a clear sense of body integrity and body abilities, as well as opportunities for learning. According to Piaget, children construct their ideas of how toys work and how materials feel and flow or break or topple. Physical causality, the ins and outs of space, tangible understanding of the chemistry of solutions and of changes due to mixing or cooking are learned as little ones are given materials and opportunities to experiment. Logico-mathematical understandings of what pairs mean or polar opposites (such as hot and cold) or gradations of heaviness, of color, of size are learned as children manipulate materials provided by thoughtful caregivers. That a dolly cannot sit in her toy chair but will slide out unless you bend her legs may mystify a toddler. But your wise generosity in providing safe opportunities to build, mush, pretend play, dig, wash, solve puzzles, will allow the growing

toddler to learn how the world works, just as your responsive tuned-in interactions are teaching how the world of social relationships works.[1] Opportunities for tiny babies to push up from safe, warm, firm floor surfaces gives them a chance to stretch and move and attempt to corral and use safe nearby toys. And an empty spaghetti box or margarine tub is a fine toy, as are two spoons to bang together.

13. Offer choices. Especially in the negative stages of the toddler period, life gets rough for families and caregivers. The almost-angel baby of the past year has become a no-sayer of terrible swiftness and conviction. Yet before we can affirm our faith in the ways in which adult lives can be generative and generous, giving and sharing, we need to become separate persons, who wrest for ourselves the right to say no to others' ideas, suggestions, wishes, and requests. No-saying is a stage on the pathway to yes-affirming life. But this stage is hard on caregivers. Often resentment of the toddler grows and becomes an intractable sorrow or anger invading the loving feelings that sustain adults during the myriad tasks of tending young ones. Lickona, in his book Raising Good Children (1983), offers helpful ideas to cope with a strong toddler need to assert his or her own will. As you come to the corner of a street crossing with a recalcitrant toddler, you can say, "I have to hold your hand now--which hand would you like me to hold?"

Offering choices can ease naptimes and snacktimes. "On which side of the cot do you want to lay down your head--this side or that one?" "Which would you like to drink, juice or milk?" This latter offering netted me a firm

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[1]The Caldwell HOME stimulation scale (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984) is an excellent tool for checking whether your caregiving, homey environment is providing enough of the interpersonal and learning experiences that help a young child develop optimally.

"Juice" from a toddler who had just as strongly rejected either suggestion earlier when offered singly!

Questions that alert a tot's attention to relevant variables can help them make appropriate or more reasonable decisions without the fussing and fighting in which adults often became mired. The child who just wants to rush out to the yard and play--minus a jacket or gloves--needs to be asked to look outside and see what is on the lawn . . . and then asked how will that white snow feel, warm or freezing? And what could we put on our hands and ourselves to let us enjoy playing in that cold snow without shivering and getting soaking wet? Balancing rights and responsibilities is a skillful and sometimes frustrating task for parents.

14. A sense of humor helps. Some days nothing goes well for babies or for caregivers. Tempers are frayed; disappointments are strong. A sense of humor works somewhat like a prayer. It acknowledges the impossibility of perfect adults or perfect babies or perfect days. It is a way of seeking sustenance to tide us over till better times. Faith in future harmonies, faith in the work of loving kindness has so far managed to sustain us through the difficult days. Using a whimsical sense that "nothing works well on earth all the time" can help. Vegetables are squeezed to a mush by baby as he dives into his soup with messing energy and sensuous enjoyment. Or, a baby squeezes her banana through all fingers and proudly through her curls. Oh, well. A fancy beauty salon would charge a fortune for vegetable or fruit hair shampoos or skin treatments! Some days if as parents we find ourselves yelling at a child, we can stop and say "My big lion voice is even scaring me! I guess I better try another voice. How about trying a different animal, like the nice papa bear in Goldilocks!" If a toddler is up to it, humor games can often

lighten up a day. Jokes like "Doggies miaow" can cause grins and delighted rejoinders from an older toddler who catches on to the game (Honig, 1988).

15. Help both male and female babies to become agentic and caring. Kaplan (1978) notes as a therapist that the greater activity levels of boy babies leads to more climbing and vigorous bodily movement. By such activities, boy babies define their body boundaries more definitively and often earn the admiring glances of parents who urge on their mastery experiences and victories. Little girls may not be allowed as much bodily risk taking such as climbing and galloping all over. Why not?

In her thoughtful work In a Different Voice, Gilligan (1982) notes that there is a dialectic tension between the moral ideals of cooperation, interdependence, and the need for self actualization. The community of faith demands that we manage this dialectic tension in creative ways.

To become the most qualified, unique individuals we can become and yet to remain committed to a faith community that serves each other in love and commitment both to help others and to let others have control over their lives--this is indeed a challenge.

Gilligan observes that "male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community" (p. 156). In this dialogue between fairness and caring there are implications that perhaps faith may evolve differently for males and females. A conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around "the understanding of responsibility and relationship, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules" (p. 19). Can we help both female and male infants enrich each of these

strands? Caregivers concerned with sex role socialization may need some strong help in the process of increasing tolerance for both aspects of morality. Rigid absolutes and intolerance of girls' messiness, of boys' boisterousness, female vigor, male dreaminess--these may diminish the full humanity of our children who will grow into future guardians of our faith communities. Research shows that male toddlers are needier in asking for help or nurturance from caregivers than are females (Honig & Wittmer, 1985). Both sexes were equally compliant to adults. Yet caregivers often responded significantly more to noncompliance of male toddlers, as if they suspected boys will be naughtier. The roots of faith are as surely related to the needs of attunement to the individual needs of children, whether male or female, as to other aspects of their development.

16. Crack the code of your angers. Briggs (1975) urges that we try to find the underlying feelings for our angers. None of us is exempt from anger. But often, hostility is engendered by unrealistic standards for babies and young children. Often our own feelings of shame or jealousy from the past lead us to strong criticism or shame of traits in our little ones that we felt miserable about when we were young. Briggs notes that "sad covers up mad." If your child is too low key, without the sparkle and bounce that signals a rooted faith in family good will, then underneath there may be real feelings of resentment about too much parental control, or too many early demands for training or perfection. Humans need to know they can grow at their own pace; make mistakes; have time to become more adept. Comparing kids is a virulent poison that can lead to aggravated jealousy. Briggs notes that jealousy comes from feeling disadvantaged. What kind of faith community can children grow up to build if deep in their hearts they smolder with the resentment that they were never smart enough, pretty enough, or athletic enough to please their

parents? If, on the other hand, you feel sad, perhaps you resent "giving in" too much to your youngsters. Parents have rights, too.

Be firm and loving; be accepting and encouraging (Baumrind, 1977). Have faith that although your child is different from you, your authoritative (rather than authoritarian or permissive) approach to discipline and child rearing will enhance the chances for your child to grow up to be a freely choosing and active member of a faith community. By "giving in" and not helping young ones understand reasonable rules of behavior, we take away their chances to learn to cope with frustration, to learn to find ways to fit into family needs, and to be responsible members of a household. How challenging is the dance between "duty" and "freedom." Parenting is a hard job; high expectations and firm rules plus unconditional commitment and loyalty to children must be wisely combined in the authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1980).

17. Continuity of care can sustain faith in a secure and loving God. If there are too many changes in an infant's life, that baby can become terrified, acted out with psychosomatic symptoms such as diarrheas, sleep troubles, and crankiness (Honig, 1985b). Find supportive others who can provide stable consistent care for your infant if you cannot provide care continually. Frequent daily separations and changes are devastating to an infant's sense of basic trust in his or her personal community. If the roots of faith development lie in the earliest experiences of confidence in caregivers, then families must think about and feel through the implications of lack of stability and continuity in infant care.

18. Model generosity, attunement, mutuality, and personal courtesies. As the infinite goodness of religious faith sustains adults in their trials, children are sustained by the memories of caregivers who were positive role

models (Segal & Segal, 1987). Children are flexible. They can forgive our human foibles and failings and "ornery" times as we live through (and do not fall apart at) their tantrums and troubles. But for a faith community to flourish, the preponderance of a baby's experiences needs to be overwhelmingly that of positive models. That we are indeed powerful models is certainly salient when three announces "I'm going to marry Daddy when I grow up," or "My Mama is the best cooker!" or in the play behaviors of children who fuss over and cuddle or spank teddy bear or dolls as they are treated.

19. Baby proof the environment to cut down on forbidden spaces and actions. A safe environment supports energized explorations. When curiosity is killed, a toddler's enthusiasm for learning may fade away. Sometimes children who are too dutiful feel guilty if they explore the boundaries of their own needs, their own unique gifts, and potentialities. Let the physical environment in the early years sustain early growth into the special and wonderful self of each individual child. Pots and pans can be dragged out of low kitchen cabinets for play, but cleaning agents need to be safely put away. Couches and cushions need to be tough for toddler clambering. Silk damask slipcovers don't belong in homes where babies are growing up!

20. Accept the <u>see-sawing needs</u> of toddlers. As children grow, they sometimes regress toward more immature behaviors. A toddler with a new baby in the family may ask to have a bottle. A bottle of water carried triumphantly around the house will not cripple the emotional development of your 2 1/2 year old. He may feel satisfied instead of aflame with jealousy over the sucking privileges of the new baby. Have faith in the ultimate upward spiraling of development. If you calmly accept some regressions, some tryouts of the old ways (diapers on for tonight, although we are mostly toilet trained; a pacifier for nap because a visiting baby cousin has one), and if

you don't fuss much over these flareups of earlier modes, they will fall away quickly as the child forges onward toward more mature modes of behavior.

Rapprochement is the name Margaret Mahler gives to the toddler period where darting or dashing away often alternates with needing to fling oneself onto the caregiver for security or refuge. If we do not have faith that this see-sawing toward independence will work itself out, we may cripple faith development by calling toddler a "baby" for needing a lap or we may resent a toddler for dancing away so bravely as if he didn't need us anymore. Toddlers are difficult to live with. They may call up the painful ghosts from our past when we were difficult babies and caregivers were furious with us (Fraiberg, 1980). Keeping the goal of faith building can help us keep our sanity and our "cool" sometimes as the (to us unreasonable) work of toddlers defining their personhood goes on.

21. Rethink through your own parenting. Sometimes present parenting is a powerful time to lay old ghosts to rest. Perhaps we had a miserable time of it as young children ourselves. How then can we build a firm foundation for our children's faith? Fortunately, research (Ricks, 1986) is clear that agonies from the past need not become intrusive, spiteful spirits in our own caregiving. Suppose you had miserable experiences as a child. It helps if you are indignant and even angry at the lack of faith building or nurturing you received, or if you are forgiving at the foolishness or even the cruelty of rearing adults in your life, if you have re-thought through the kinds of tones and cuddles and compassions and forbearance and encouragements you wish you had. How you construe your own parents' behavior is crucial. If you felt rejected, but can feel that this early rejection is an attribute of your parents and not a reflection of your own essential worth as a person and now as a parent, you can restore the roots of faith. A pastor or rabbi or

counselor may help you in these struggles to reconstruct self esteem. Chances are very good that you can provide a faith-sustaining personal environment for your young one with strong counteridentification rather than identification with aggression received.

22. Reframe certain exasperating infant behaviors so you see them in a more developmental framework. For example, Tess is dunking one piece of bread into her milk. She plunges her hand way into the glass wetting her shirt sleeve in order to retrieve the soggy mess. As she squeezes the gloppy piece in her hand, her eyes widen. This sure does not look like the dry piece of bread still sitting on her high chair tray. Rather than see this as deliberate defiance of your instructions not to mess, try to reframe. Tess was exploring ideas about disappearance (as the bread absorbed milk and slowly sank from sight). Her surprise is a good sign that she is making comparisons and learning about the transformations that occur when some items absorb liquid. If you reframe so that you can understand from the child's point of view how the situation seems, you have a better chance of acting reasonably rather than out of anger. If you want such explorations to be less messy, you might program them for bath time. But babies are messy creatures. They drip from noses and bottoms. They are sensuous and enjoy tastes and pats. Reframing can save us from attributing to babies evil specific designs to aggravate us. Keep the faith with baby. Intentions to explore should not be confused with deliberate intents to hurt.

A father was scolding his toddler one sunny, bitter-cold day as I walked out of our local community center. The child, snuggled in his snow suit, was joyously hurling himself against the walls of snow that lined the walkway, and making angel-in-the-snow impressions with his arms and body. The father was nagging him sharply that he would get his snowsuit messed up and mother would

have to wash it. The father told the child to stop running into the snow piled high. I turned, smiled, and remarked to the father that we were lucky to have washing machines, and although we did not have nice sandy beaches or warm weather where a child could play freely with sand, we were indeed lucky to have fluffy white snow where he could pretend to play sand games of making body impressions. The father stopped short, his eyes lit up as if he were actively engaged in reframing his idea of the child's behavior from "naughty, disobedient" to "playful, imaginative." Then he cheerfully called out, "O.K., I guess you can play with the snow as much as you want!"

23. Help your baby with emotional homework. Babies have to learn as they grow that the person who loves and cares for them is the same person who denies them cookies just before supper, or who may take them off for a nap when they are overtired and acting out crankily. Learning to cope with the puzzle of good and bad together is hard. Toddlers often lash out and say, "You are the meanest grandma" to a grandma who has been changing the new baby and cuddling him. Just yesterday the toddler delightedly welcomed grandma for a visit and snuggled happily next to her as she read him story after story, a luxury for which papa and momma may not have as much time. Toddlers need time to integrate the idea that we can manage to love someone and also resent that same person. This Mahlerian <u>constancy</u> is a long, hard achievement of the early years. By the end of the infancy period, constancy has begun to provide the inner lodestone. Constancy as adults assures that we do not fall apart when things turn sour or mean or exasperating. Constancy is the faith that love and good feelings are still possible, deeply lodged within us. Constancy helps us to get through disappointment and loss and sustains the commitment to the lovingkindness of our faith when loss or sorrows weigh us down. Accepting

the struggle of your baby learning to create constancy is a sign of your faith in the mighty forces of growth within.

24. Find supports for yourselves as caregivers. No one can be a giver all the time. The balance of giving and getting learned so long ago in the earliest years of life can tip to deplete any caregiver. Wise caregivers will try to find support networks, surrogate caregivers, time for personal unwinding. This may involve firm rules for a toddler rest time even if the toddler is wakeful during that hour and looks at books quietly. You need rest times, too. Nurturing the worthy person within each of us can help renew our energy for the awesome tasks we tackle daily--building emotionally healthy, joyous, people-cherishing children who will be well on their way to learning how to be positive participants in a larger community of faith later on because they have been tiny members of an ongoing faith community in the home.

Covenant in the Community: Ideas for Supporting Infant Flourishing

Beyond the principles and practices families need in rearing infants and toddlers, parents have civic responsibilities in the larger community. Here are some ideas to enhance the ultimate societal as well as personal goal of rearing young ones who can more securely take their places in a faith-full society as well as family.

1. Preparation for parenthood. Many schools have classes in macrame or car driving or other socially useful subjects. Yet schools, churches, and synagogues need to offer supportive education-for-parenthood classes.

In schools, high quality infant/toddler care centers can serve as places for students to practice tender, responsive care for little ones. The nursery can serve as a hub around which shop courses, English composition, and history courses can be coordinated with the experiences of students who are learning to notice, interpret, and respond contingently and tenderly to the needs of

infants. Toy making and essay writing are adjuncts to caregiving. High quality infant caregivers would serve as excellent models and cheerful supporters of early efforts to tune in to the needs of tiny others. In Little Rock, Arkansas, Dr. Bettye Caldwell has videotaped wonderful examples of how she and her staff taught fifth graders to become tuned in, enthusiastic advocates for and helpers in the care of babies. Another film, called "Oh boy, babies!" is an enthusiastic depiction of how pre-teen boys learned to help and care for infants whom parents brought into an elective class.

2. Hospital or clinic-based prenatal counseling courses that are currently available to explain and demonstrate breathing exercises and teach about extra iron in the diet for pregnant women could be expanded to include parenting education. Parents-to-be could learn characteristics and needs of babies in the first years--needs for skin sharing, body cuddling, and sensitivity to infant signals. Such ministrations ensure that the Garden of Eden is really an on-earth experience for babies long before remembrance or language can articulate such satisfactions. When suckling to satiety, pleasureful play, and sumptuous laps are the birthright of babies, then faith development can be more safely ensured as a community experience for all infants.

3. Options and choices including termination of pregnancy for pregnant parents who cannot or are not willing to rear a baby and child lovingly and securely must be available in society. Babies born have fundamental rights to grow up in a personal community that keeps the faith with their being. When parents cannot or do not wish to make this special commitment, they need support for and availability of other options.

4. Parental leave policies in industry and business that guarantee job, health care, and insurance benefits to new parents must be vigorously promoted

at the legislative level. It is our responsibility that children should receive the stable, harmonious, tuned-in kind of care they need. If we are not willing to advocate for children on a societal level, we will rue the results in increased mental health problems, delinquency, and school dropouts. The cost of one year in prison is far higher than the cost of supportive societal policies (Children's Defense Fund, 1987).

5. Funding for training high quality infant/toddler caregivers is another important obligation of faith communities. The curious aspect here is that society is willing to put money into schools for training licensed auto mechanics or give funds for training doctors and dentists. But infant care specialists are often recruited at the lowest wage levels. The average child care worker in the United States has a job in the Federal Register listed below parking lot attendant! For many workers recruited to care for babies, the names Ainsworth, Mahler, and Piaget could just as well be Swiss watch brands rather than important guides to quality care practices.

6. Preventive infant mental health facilities need to become as common as physical health checkup clinics. Hot lines, warm lines, drop-in centers, respite shelters, and trained neighborhood parent networks can help. "Kitchen therapy" personnel can visit homes, hear out and professionally heal and banish the sad and angry "ghosts" from some parents' past lives. Aggressive ghosts may block gentle alliances with the goodness in babies when parents, hurt earlier themselves, only perceive babies as spiteful, evil, or bad (Fraiberg, 1980).

Conclusions

Let those of us who love and work with infants and toddlers help to provide for them the nurture and guidance they need so that at the end of the infant period the child can:

Gather and gather the strands of cherishing.

Gather and gather the voices that have been loving, playful, kindly, and have made them wriggle with joy.

Gather the shiningness out of caregiver eyes.

Gather the rhythms that have met their rhythms.

Gather the mutual attunements and firm calm disciplines that have made them feel secure in families, confident of rights as of responsibilities.

And from all these hopeful affirmations, the young ones gather the fabric yarns to weave themselves a coat of many colors,

like the coat of Joseph the favored one.

So clothed, babies can grow to sturdy faith:

--faith in themselves, in the value of their struggles to grow, learn, and work.

--faith in the lovingkindness of caregivers.

--faith in the essential orderliness and friendliness of the universe and of Godliness.

--faith in their ability to give generously unto others as they have been given unto.

--faith in a community of service and reciprocity.

Hope and faith grow out of these subtle intertwinings of adults with infants in the early years, and the child who ends up in such a faith community knows what <u>being</u> is compared to <u>appearances</u>.

May we all keep the faith with infants and toddlers in the first years of life.

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